

# VOTER ACTION KIT

EVERY  
NATIVE  
VOTE  
COUNTS



National  
Congress of  
American  
Indians

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# EVERY ELECTION IMPACTS INDIAN COUNTRY

**EVERY ELECTION MATTERS. EVERY NATIVE VOTE COUNTS.**

We have seen the impact of the Native vote on local, state, and national elections. When we come together, we create lasting change in our communities. The Native vote is vital to ensuring American Indian and Alaska Native voices are heard in the political process.

Tribal Nations have worked tirelessly to protect and increase Native rights and representation. While much has been accomplished, there is still work to be done, and elections to be decided. **Native communities hold unique solutions to the challenges we are facing today. Let no vote be wasted—get out the Native vote!**

Whether it's a tribal council runoff or presidential race, every election impacts Indian Country. We feel the impacts of each election at every level of government. As the 2020 census showed, Native communities continue to grow and thrive. **Native votes hold the power to make a difference.**

Increasing Native representation in the election process is key to growing our political power. Each civic role plays a significant part in creating a better future for the next generation.

**And with the youngest Native voters now entering the political process, the Native vote will continue to create and inspire change.**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMMITMENT TO GETTING OUT THE NATIVE VOTE.**

**CONTACT US:**  
[NativeVote@NCAI.org](mailto:NativeVote@NCAI.org)

# WHAT IS NATIVE VOTE?

**Native Vote is a nonpartisan campaign** initiated by the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI). It is designed to encourage American Indian and Alaska Native people to build power by exercising their right to vote.

## WHY IS NATIVE VOTE IMPORTANT?

The U.S. President, Congress, state governors, state legislatures, and county and local elected officials make important policy decisions that affect Native peoples. Increasing Native participation in all elections will lead to better responsiveness to the needs of Tribal Nations and communities.

## RULES FOR BEING NONPARTISAN

As a nonpartisan and nonprofit campaign, we are allowed to conduct voter registration drives and engage in nonpartisan voter education and turnout activities. By law, however, we are forbidden from engaging in partisan political activity in support of, or in opposition to, any candidate for public office. We are most interested in helping Native voters to come into their power and share their voices.

## NATIVE VOTE COORDINATORS' DUTIES CANNOT INCLUDE

While representing or participating in voter activities as a Native Vote team member, coordinators should not:

- ✓ Endorse a specific candidate, party, or Political Action Committee, or support them financially.
- ✓ Work with a political candidate, party, or Political Action Committee in planning or carrying out voter registration, education, or turnout activities.
- ✓ Ask a candidate to sign a pledge on any issue (tacit endorsement).
- ✓ Wear candidate or party items while registering voters or working at the polls.
- ✓ Let candidates use your facilities or resources, unless they are made equally available to all candidates at their fair market value, such as a room commonly used for public events.



# NATIVE VOTE IS NATIONAL

## NATIVE VOTE IS TRIBAL AND URBAN

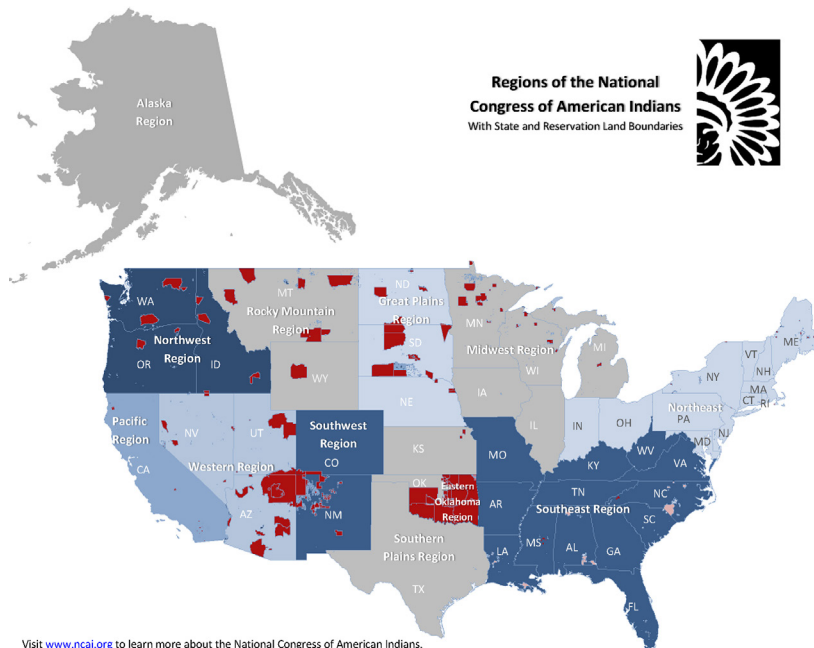
Working with Tribal Nations, regional associations, Native nonprofits, grassroots voter groups, youth groups, and volunteers are all part of how we conduct outreach in Indian Country. From increasing participation in the political process to swinging election outcomes on a national level, every Native vote counts.

## NATIVE VOTE IS LOCAL, STATEWIDE, AND REGIONAL

**NCAI consists of 12 regions. We serve Tribal Nations and urban Native communities in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, believing that building Native political participation and power is a local and national effort.**

Native Vote seeks to educate, advocate, and mobilize increased American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) participation in every aspect of the election process. We encourage and support the Native Vote efforts of all Tribal Nations and urban Native communities.

## NCAI REGIONS



- Alaska Region
- Great Plains Region
- Midwest Region
- Northeast Region
- Northwest Region
- Pacific Region
- Rocky Mountain Region
- Southeast Region
- Southern Plains and Eastern Oklahoma Region
- Southwest Region
- Western Region

Note: Map from 2014. Information may have changed.

# GOVERNMENT 101

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The U.S. federal government is broken into three separate branches: Legislative, Executive, and Judicial.

**The Legislative Branch, called the U.S. Congress, creates laws and allocates funding** to federal departments and agencies. **It is broken up between the House of Representatives and the Senate.**

**Every two years, each seat of the House is up for election, with the Senate having one-third of its seats up for election.** There is no way for the public to remove a member of the Legislative branch, other than to vote them out in the next election cycle.

**Midterm elections are important in electing representatives for the House and Senate.**

**The Executive Branch enforces the laws passed by the legislature and also conducts foreign affairs** with other nations. **The President of the United States is in charge of the Executive Branch,** with each cabinet member running a department of the government with the various agencies and programs reporting to the secretary of that department.

**The Judicial Branch interprets the laws and determines if they are unconstitutional or not,** depending on the case. Federal judges are all nominated by the President and then approved by vote in the Senate.



All federal judges are given lifetime appointments and can only be removed through impeachment by the House and conviction in the Senate.

Most **state governments** are made up of the same three branches, but this can vary from state to state. While some states have year-round legislatures like the federal government, most states have sessions that meet only a few months out of the year.

All states have a legislative body made up of a Senate and House of Representatives, which can also be called a General Assembly. The governor of the state is the head of the executive branch of their state. Each state has its own supreme court with its own system of lower courts similar to the federal system.

**At the local level,** county and city government structures can vary as well, but the basic three-branch system typically exists across all levels of government throughout the United States.

“[MT Sen.] Jon [Tester] regularly visits every Montana Indian Reservation, sits down with tribal leaders and families, and brings their concerns straight back to Washington.”

**Lailani Upham,**  
Char-Koosta News Oct. 4, 2018



## TYPES OF ELECTIONS

### What are primary elections?

The first election of the season. Primary elections determine which candidates will proceed to the general election. These elections occur for both midterm elections and presidential elections.

### What are general elections?

General elections are the final contests between candidates from each party. The outcome determines the person who will hold the contested office until the next election.

### What are midterm elections?

Midterm elections take place halfway between presidential elections. Congressional elections are held every two years, with one-third of the Senate and all of the House of Representatives decided during midterm elections.

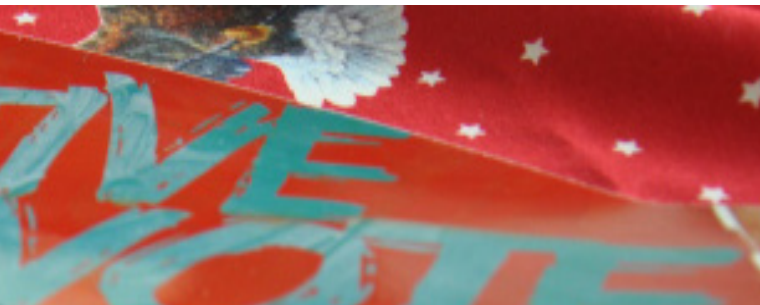


## EVERY ELECTION MATTERS

**While they don't receive nearly enough attention, midterm elections are vital to Indian Country.**

Midterm elections determine who will be advocating for Indian Country. This is especially significant in the House of Representatives and the Senate. House seats are up for election every two years, including during every midterm election.

Getting out the Native vote in every local, state, and national election is essential in ensuring that Indian Country continues to grow and thrive.



“My success in running this historic write-in campaign would not have been possible ... if Alaska's Native people did not turn out to the polls, did not energize, or did not come together as they did. I deeply, deeply appreciate the trust that Alaska Native peoples have placed in me.”

**Senator Lisa Murkowski**, speaking on her 2010 election at the 2011 State of Indian Nations Address

# CIVIC HOLIDAYS AND VOTER ID LAWS 2022



## CIVIC HOLIDAYS

### October

10/3-10/7/2022-National Voter Education Week

10/28/2022-Vote Early Day

### November

11/7/2022-Election Hero Day

11/2-11/8/2022-Election Day/Democracy Day

## VOTER ID LAWS

Voter identification laws have long been a point of contention. Strict voter ID laws disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). It is important to check for updates to voting laws, particularly when it comes to required forms of identification. Strict voter identification laws (including laws that target tribal IDs being used to vote) have been cited as one form of voter suppression for BIPOC communities.

### NOT STRICT

**No ID document required: 16 states**

CA, DC, IL, MA, MD, ME, MN, NC, NE, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OR, PA, and VT

### LESS STRICT

**ID requested, photo ID not required: 13 states**

AK, CO, CT, DE, HI, IA, KY, NH, UT, VA, WV, and WA

### MODERATELY STRICT

**Photo ID requested: 9 states**

AL, FL, ID, LA, MI, MT, RI, SC, SD, and TX

### STRICT

**Non-photo ID accepted: 4 states**

AZ, ND, OH, and WY

### STRICTEST

**Photo ID required: 7 states**

AR, GA, IN, KS, MO, MS, and WI





# FIELD ORGANIZER/VOLUNTEER PLANNING TEMPLATE

We want you to be successful in your Native vote efforts. To assist with this, we have created an accelerated planning outline with four steps to get you started.



Create a timeline



Set your goals based on your timeline



Determine tactics to achieve the goals



Implement your local get-out-the-vote campaign

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## STEP ONE · CREATING YOUR TIMELINE

The first step in the campaign is to review the timeline. It is easier to create a timeline by working backward from Election Day. Also, it is important to note and understand when all the voting and registration deadlines occur in October and November before Election Day.

### STEP 2 · SET YOUR GOALS BASED ON YOUR TIMELINE

- A. Register 100 new voters.
- B. Recruit 10 volunteers to support Native Vote activities.
- C. Increase community turnout by 25%.
- D. Educate the community on potential voter disinformation and suppression activities.

### STEP 3 · DETERMINE TACTICS TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS

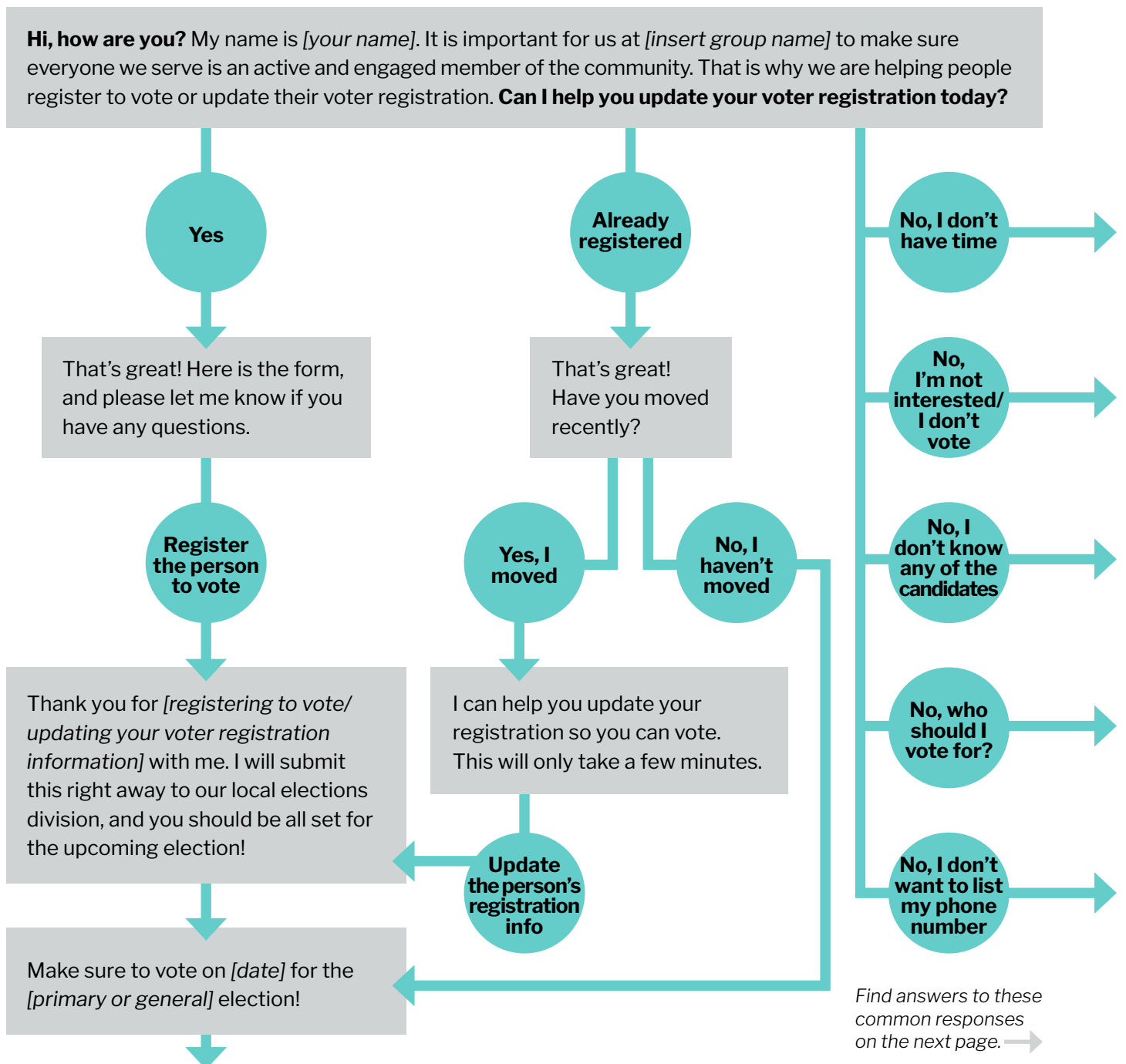
- A. Host a voter registration drive.
- B. Reach out to community partners.
- C. Know the candidates and issues on the ballot.
- D. Organize a phone bank to increase voter turnout.
- E. Make a voting plan.

## STEP 4 · LAUNCH YOUR NATIVE VOTE CAMPAIGN!

# VOTER REGISTRATION SCRIPT

Adapted from  Nonprofit VOTE

Below is a sample script to help guide your conversations about voter registration. Be sure to tailor it to your community.



Please ask the voter for their phone number, if not provided, in order to offer additional resources and information. Before the voter leaves, please look over the form and ensure all required fields are completed and legible.

Some common responses, with answers and tips:

**No, I don't have time** → I understand you are really busy. Filling out this form only takes a couple minutes and I can make sure it gets turned in for you. You can save time by registering with me today.

**No, I'm not interested/ I don't vote** → I understand. There are a lot of challenges out there. We want to register everyone in our community because it is important that the voices of our tribal community are heard. Just to let you know, I will be here on *[insert dates you are tabling]* if you change your mind about registering to vote.

**No, I don't know any of the candidates** → I understand! We are nonpartisan and cannot recommend candidates, but you may want to get this information from a friend or family member.

*Or provide the person a sample ballot or nonpartisan voter guide if available. Consider referring them to a nonpartisan website with information about all the candidates.*

**No, who should I vote for?** → We are a nonpartisan organization and we do not endorse candidates. We suggest talking to a friend or family member that might be able to help.

*Or provide the person a sample ballot or nonpartisan voter guide if available.*

**No, I don't want to list my phone number** → It is not a required field, but it is really helpful to list your phone number in case the local board of elections has a problem with your registration and needs to contact you.

# VOTER SUPPRESSION POST-2020

For the last two decades, the power of the Native vote has grown. The number of victories increases with every election, with mainstream media outlets naming Native voters as playing a key role in the 2020 presidential election.

While we are increasing Native political power and representation, we are also contending with reinvigorated attempts at voter suppression, intimidation, and discrimination across Indian Country.

## VOTER SUPPRESSION LEGISLATION

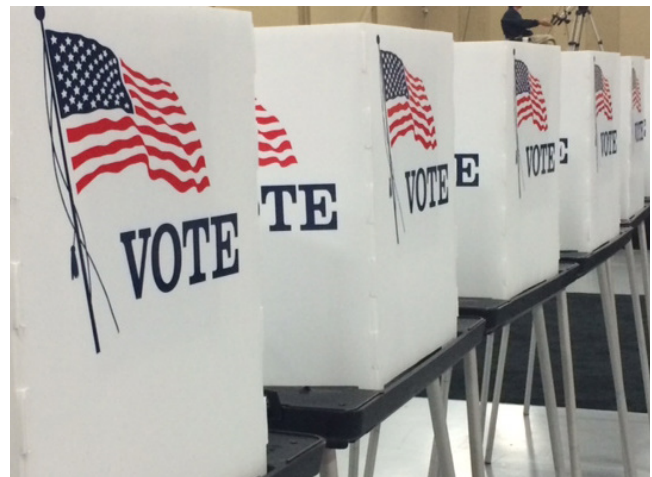
Since 2020, legislators have introduced hundreds of bills aimed at making it more difficult for minority voters to cast their ballot.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice, 34 restrictive voting laws were passed in 19 states by the end of 2021. That year also saw 49 states introduce over 400 bills with provisions seeking to restrict voting—provisions that would disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).

## COMMON VOTER SUPPRESSION LAWS:

- » Strict voter ID laws.
- » Restrictions on early and absentee voting.
- » Legislation that would allow for partisan election interference.
- » Limiting who can return mail-in ballots.
- » Other bills aimed at making it harder for poor and minority voters to cast their ballots.

*Note: With so much election information moving online, Tribal Nations should be aware that voter misinformation could be targeted to Native voters online to suppress the vote.*



## VOTER SUPPRESSION IN NATIVE COMMUNITIES

Several types of voter suppression are seen on American Indian reservations, including rejecting tribal IDs as valid identification, few (or no) polling places in Native communities, and forcing reservation residents to travel long distances to vote.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I EXPERIENCE OR WITNESS VOTER SUPPRESSION?

The Native American Rights Fund (NARF) is a trusted source for Native vote information, education, and advocacy. Call 1-866-OUR-VOTE, an election protection hotline, and ask for NARF if you run into any voting issues.

**NARF's election protection hotline and the [vote@narf.org](mailto:vote@narf.org) email address will be monitored to assist Native voters and organizers.**

# TRIBAL NATION ELECTIONS, SOVEREIGNTY, & OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS

## TRIBAL NATIONS ARE ONE OF FOUR SOVEREIGNS NAMED IN THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

Tribal Nations exercise their inherent right to sovereignty in multiple ways, particularly in electing their own political bodies to represent and advance their interests on and off reservations. Many local leaders go on to advocate for Native interests in state or federal offices, representing Indian Country from state and national platforms.

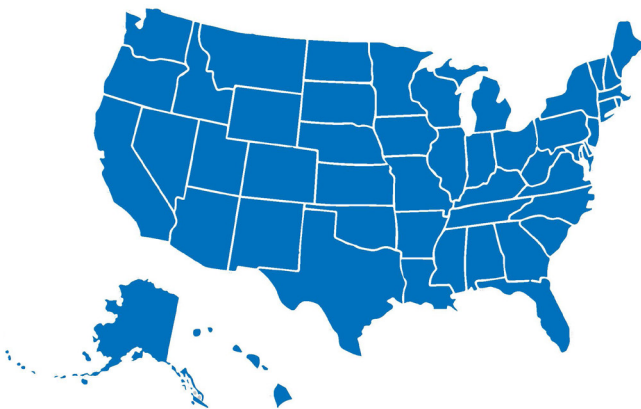
We know that every election is an opportunity to create change. **Whether it is a local, state, or national election, Native voters help determine their grandchildren's futures.**

## WHY TRIBAL NATION ELECTIONS MATTER:

- ✓ Native votes are Native voices. Native voices matter in who leads a Tribal Nation for the next term.
- ✓ Voting ensures Tribal Nations continue to grow and thrive for generations to come.
- ✓ Tribal leaders often go on to run for state and national office.



## SPOTLIGHT ON TRIBAL NATIONS



- » There are 574 sovereign Tribal Nations in the United States. Each has a Nation-to-Nation relationship with the federal government.
- » These 574 Tribal Nations are located across 35 states, and each Tribal Nation exercises its own sovereignty.
- » There were 334 federally and state-recognized American Indian reservations in 2010.
- » Each of the 574 Tribal Nations is legally defined as a federally recognized Tribal Nation.

Source: NCAI's *Tribal Nations and the United States*

# THE US CENSUS, REDISTRICTING, & GERRYMANDERING

## VOTER SUPPRESSION COMES IN MANY FORMS

Gerrymandering is one of the most insidious forms of voter suppression. It occurs at the state government level and disproportionately impacts Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities.

**While gerrymandering is a systemic attempt to dilute the will of the people, there are ways we can combat its negative impacts.** The first step is knowing what gerrymandering is and how legislators quietly work to suppress the vote.

### 1. THE CENSUS

**The United States census** is conducted every 10 years. It is an extensive process that aims to document population and demographic information.

**The U.S. Census Bureau also releases detailed population and housing information via the American Community Survey.**

The data gathered during the census is used to determine government funding for schools, roads, social services, and more.

**The results are also used to redraw voting boundaries in a process called redistricting. This is supposed to ensure fair representation in the voting process.**



### 2. REDISTRICTING

**Redistricting is a once-in-a-decade opportunity to redraw state voting boundaries.** Ideally, census results are used to create voting districts that are accurate reflections of their communities. **Redistricting should ensure that all voters can contribute to election outcomes.**

### 3. GERRYMANDERING

**Unfortunately, redistricting can be used to gerrymander, or to redraw political voting maps in order to benefit one group over another.** Discriminatory redistricting targets members of opposing political parties and minority groups.

DID YOU KNOW?

The U.S. Census Bureau also releases detailed population and housing information via the American Community Survey.

Many Tribal Nations prefer to use American Community Survey data as it is more detailed and accurate.

Native participation in the census and American Community Survey is vital to Indian Country.

## HOW DOES GERRYMANDERING WORK?

Two common gerrymandering processes are called “packing” and “cracking.”

In **packing**, legislators concentrate members of a target group into one district so that their votes do not sway the outcomes of other, more politically desirable districts.

**Cracking** involves redrawing districts to spread target groups across districts to prevent their votes from impacting the desired election outcome.

## WHO DOES IT HARM?

According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), gerrymandering disproportionately impacts BIPOC communities.

While the 2020 census showed major increases in minority populations, this was not reflected in some states’ redistricting efforts in advance of the 2022 midterm elections.

Gerrymandering can be seen in states where American Indian reservations are either:

1. Isolated in a single district (packing) or
2. Split into multiple voting districts (cracking).

Sources: American Civil Liberties Union. U.S. Census Bureau, National Congress of State Legislatures, Native American Rights Fund



## WHAT CAN BE DONE?

In order to prevent gerrymandering from splitting the Native vote, it is essential that legislators consult with Tribal Nations and Native organizations to conduct redistricting fairly.

## IN CLOSING ...

In 2018, the Supreme Court found partisan gerrymandering legal in a controversial ruling. **Discriminatory redistricting is, and will remain, a major issue in voter suppression.**

Gerrymandering is an attempt to dilute the power and will of the voters. Take action and learn more about voter suppression from our partners at the **Native American Rights Fund.**

Visit [vote.narf.org/advocacy-actions/](https://vote.narf.org/advocacy-actions/).

# TCU STUDENT VOTE GUIDE



## GETTING OUT THE VOTE WHILE GETTING TO CLASS

There are numerous ways to help friends, classmates, and family get ready for Election Day! We can all contribute to building Native political power, representation, and impact. **Here are some tips for getting your community ready to get out the Native vote on Election Day:**

### MAKE A VOTING PLAN

Are you registered to vote? Will you vote by mail or in person? Will you vote early? Do you need an absentee ballot? Do you know the requirements for your preferred voting option? What are the voter ID laws in your state? Make a voting plan with friends and family to ensure your voices are heard.

### ORGANIZE

What and when are the important deadlines and dates? Work with your community to raise awareness of your state's deadlines for early voting, submitting mail in ballots, voter registration, and more.

How will you get to the polls on Election Day? Do any friends or family members also need rides? Organizing rides to the polls is a great way to get out the vote!

## NATIVE YOUTH ARE LEADING THE WAY

**According to the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, there are currently 35 fully accredited tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) in the United States.**

Often based on American Indian reservations and within urban Native centers, TCUs provide innovative, community-centered Indigenous higher education opportunities. **Significantly, tribal colleges and universities are home to the youngest demographic of empowered Native voters.**

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I EXPERIENCE OR WITNESS VOTER SUPPRESSION?

The Native American Rights Fund (NARF) is a trusted source for Native vote information, education, and advocacy. Having served Indian Country for 50 years, NARF continues to defend Native rights, which includes combating Native voter suppression in and out of the courtroom. NARF seeks to protect Native peoples' right to vote.

Call 1-866-OUR-VOTE, an election protection hotline, and ask for NARF if you run into any voting issues. You may also call to ask questions regarding state voter registration, identification, and other legal questions. Finally, be sure to contact NARF immediately in the event of voter suppression, intimidation, or discrimination.

NARF's election protection hotline and the [vote@narf.org](mailto:vote@narf.org) email address will be monitored to assist Native voters and organizers.



# RESOURCES FOR SUCCESS

**QUESTIONS? CONCERNS? CONTACT NATIVE VOTE!**

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

**Twitter** | [@NativeVote](#)

**Facebook** | [facebook.com/NativeVote](#)

## **WEBSITES**

[NativeVote.org](#)

[Vote.org/Register-to-Vote](#)

## **EMAIL**

[NativeVote@ncai.org](mailto:NativeVote@ncai.org)

## **PHONE**

(202) 466-7767

## **WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF VOTER INTIMIDATION, SUPPRESSION, OR DISCRIMINATION:**

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**Phone:** 1-866-OUR-VOTE | Ask for NARF

**Email:** [vote@narf.org](mailto:vote@narf.org)

**Website:** [narf.org](http://narf.org)

**Voter Advocacy Information:** [vote.narf.org/advocacy-actions](http://vote.narf.org/advocacy-actions)





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